

Select Scenes

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I NANDI

The Entrance of Sutradhara

As the Sūtradhara has completed the make-up and is ready to go to the Natyagriham, the mizhavu is played on the stage for a while, announcing that the play is to start immediately. This ritualistic drumming is known as *mizhavu occhapeduttal*. Then the lamp is lighted with three sets of wicks, one set facing the spectators and the other two facing the stage. Again the drumming of Mizhavu, accompanied with cymbals, known as *goshtikottuka*, goes on for a while. Then the Nambiar (drummer) rises from his seat, collects water in his cupped right palm along with flowers, stands beside the lamp, and recites a stanza which is a prayer for blessings on the spectators and for their protection. This ritual is known as *arangu tali* (sprinkling water on the stage), as the water and flowers in the cupped palm are sprinkled on the *arangu* (stage). He returns to his seat besides the Mizhavu and starts drumming again.

A curtain or *yavanika* (a piece of red cloth, approximately 5'x3') is held in front of the stage by two persons close by the burning lamp and about two feet above the floor so that the feet of the actors behind are visible to the audience. The Sutradhara enters from behind by the left side entrance, stands facing the drum, pays obeisance and dances his steps rhythmically in a ritualistic manner. Then he turns to the front in a stylized manner, technically known as, *Kaliyam vecchu tiriya*. He holds flowers in his cupped palms, held together. The curtain is removed. He puts on a very pleasant face and sprinkles the flowers on the stage as an act of worship. He prostrates facing the spectators.

He rises and gestures that he would perform *puja* (*Devaradharna*). He inspects the stage to check whether all equipments and materials are ready to start puja, and sees water in a pot, sandal-paste, flowers, incense, a small lamp with wicks and oil poured in, the *nivedyam* (offering of food to the deity), a plank to sit on and a fairly big oil lamp filled with oil and wicks.

He places the plank in position and is seated on it, lights the lamp, takes the *Kindi* (water vessel with a spout) and fills it with water. He places the *samkhukal* (a three-legged small hollow stand on which the conch is placed) in position. He then takes the conch and washes it with water, fills it with water, and puts sandal-paste and flowers in it. He holds flowers and sandal-paste in his cupped palms and symbolically imagining the presence of Akasa Ganga flowing in his palms, puts them in the conch. Now he offers sandal-paste and flowers to Ganga, takes water in his right palm, recites *mantra* eight times and pours it in the conch. He gestures as through writing 'Om' in the palm and

closes the water in the conch with both palms upside down. Then he pours the water in the conch into the water in the *Kindi* and makes it sanctified, for the purpose of *puja*. He sprinkles the sanctified water on all equipments kept ready for *puja*.

He offers *puja* to himself to begin with in order to purify himself for conducting the *puja*. Then in front of the burning lamp, he sprinkles cowdung in water as a solution and smears it over a small area to make it free of pollution. He sprinkles flowers, holy water, sandal-paste solution and again flowers thrice on that area. This is *pitha puja* for Ganapati. He collects holy water, sandal-paste and flowers again in his palms, imagines the presence of Ganapati and places the offerings on the holy *pitha*. He showers flowers on Ganapati, offers obeisance by joining the palms together and offers holy water, sandal-paste and flowers thrice to Ganapati. Flowers are showered on Ganapati, symbolic of worship. Now a small area in front of Ganapati is sanctified by smearing it with cow-dung solution. He washes his hand, places the offering in the sanctified area, pours two drops of clarified butter over the offering. He offers holy water, sandal-paste and flowers thrice over the *nivedyam*. He holds water in his cupped right hand, recites a *mantra* eight times and sprinkles it over the *nivedyam*. He writes 'Ra' on his hand, holds it over the *nivedyam* and washes his hand. He then takes flowers, sandal-paste and water in his right hand, holds them in his two palms cupped together, and imagines leading the *nivedyam* to Ganapati and bringing it back to where it was kept earlier. Taking a few drops of water from the conch, he offers it to the deity by pouring it down, imagining it as the '*amrtopasthanam*' (water to be taken before eating the *nivedyam* called *kudikkanir* in Malayalam); he offers flowers in continuation, pays obeisance by joining the palms together. He offers "*prana ahuti*" (i.e. offering the *nivedyam* to *pancha-prana*, the five elements of the wind god, remaining within, in order to enable one to sustain oneself and to live). Then he washes his hands, after showing that the *nivedyam* is removed. The area where the *nivedyam* was placed is smeared with cow-dung solution for purification. Again *pithapuja* is done for inviting Saraswati to be seated there. All the details of worship mentioned in the case of Ganapati are repeated for the worship of Saraswati. When all the details have been completed, water from the conch, in front of the deities, is poured down as *arghyam* (holy water for washing hands) and *achmanieyam* (water for washing the mouth). He sprinkles water and sandal-paste solution over the flowers and offers the flowers one by one, uttering *mantra*. Imagining as though his wife is approaching him after bath to offer worship before the deity, he gives her flowers earlier offered to the deity (*prasadam*). He washes his hands, then takes the remaining flowers and offers them to all the celestials, beginning with Indra. Now he prostrates himself, gets up expressing pleasure, and stands for a while and then begins action.

He is in a thoughtful mood for a while and then gesticulates: "I am in a rejoicing mood. Why? I got up early in the morning, bathed, conducted worship of my personal deity, and had my breakfast. I must move on to the stage." gesticulating as if he moves on, he reaches the stage, where he sees a large number of Brahmins. "What kind of people are they?" he reflects. He takes a few stylized steps and gesticulates: "Brahmins are of noble birth and ancestry, from the paternal and maternal sides; therefore they are absolutely unblemished and renowned for purity. Moreover, they are fully involved in the conduct

of *shadkarma* (the six duties intended to be performed by them. The duties compulsorily expected of them are (1) study of Vēda, Sāstrā etc; (2) teaching of Vēda, Sāstrā etc.; (3) conduct of sacrifices for themselves; (4) conduct of sacrifices in favour of others; (5) *danam*, i.e. giving away of gifts to those who richly deserve to receive them; and (6) receiving gifts from others, as they richly deserve them because of the life-style ordained. They are all well-versed scholars." He collects fresh flowers from plants and worships them by offering flowers at their feet reverentially. He prostrates before them and awaits orders from them. He continues, "O, meritorious Brahmins! May the Lord of the three worlds, Sri Narayana, protect you." Again he gesticulates: "What is the merit of Sri Narayana that enables him to protect you?" He signals the drumming to stop and recites;

Śaṅkha kṣīravapuḥ purā kṛtayugē
nāmnā tu Nārāyaṇaḥ
Trētāyām tripadārpitatribhuvanō
Viṣṇuḥ suvarṇaprabhaḥ
Dūrvāśyamanibhaḥ sa Rāvaṇa vadhē
Rāmō yugē dwāparē
Nityam yōñjana sannibhaḥ kaliyugē
vaḥ pātu Dāmōdaraḥ.

He questiculates the meaning of the *sloka* to the accompaniment of drumming, "In Kritayuga, Narayana has a perfectly white complexion, similar to conch and milk. In Trētayuga he measures all the three worlds with three steps as Trivikrama and is known as Vishnu, with his complexion exactly similar to gold. In Dwāpara yuga, when he kills Rāvana, he is known as Rama, with his complexion similar to the Dūrvā grass leaves (leaves of *Agnostis linearis*). He is as dark as antimony throughout Kaliyuga and is known as Damodara. May Lord Narayana protect you!"

After signalling the musicians to stop the drumming, he recites the *sloka* again. In continuation he enacts *kundalam ittu mudikkal* (gesticulates as though he touches earrings by way of self-worship) and concludes action. This is followed by the ritual known as Nityakriya, which is as follows:

He takes rhythmic steps in a stylized manner, along with the recital of *Vakūmāra*, *Kūsumasa* and goes on to *chārīs*. While the Nangiar recites *slokas* in praise of Vishnu, "Ambikē Girijē, . . . Adrima Vidruma," etc. to the accompaniment of cymbals, *kēsādipada* (head to foot) of Shiva and Parvati are described in detail, while dancing with backward and forward movements and gestures. "Mara Sarira" is recited by the Nangiar. Then he performs worship of Indra, Agni, Yama, Nirti, Varuna, Vāyu, Kubēra and Īsāna, dancing and turning to the appropriate cardinal and other directions, collecting flowers and offering them in turn. This is followed by worship of Brahma, Vishnu, Lakshmi, Ananta, Sankha, Chakra, Garuda, followed by the occupants of heaven, earth and the underworld such as all celestials, sages, Siddhas, Chāranās, Gandharvās, Kinnarās, Kimpurushās, Vidyādharas; on the earth, the Bramins, Kshatriyas, Vaisyās, Sūdrās, animals, birds etc.; in the netherworld Asurās, serpents, Rakshasas etc. followed by tiny

creatures such as ants and grass.

As the dance goes on, the tempo becomes faster gradually after the description of *Kēśadipada* of Shiva, which consists of contemplation of Shivās appearance to begin with, followed by a description of the knotted hair in *jata*, Ganga, the crescent, the forehead, the third eye, the eyebrows, the eyes, the nose, the ears with serpent ear-rings, the cheeks, the lips, the face, the neck with the poison *kālakutam*, arms with serpents worn as ornaments, chest, serpent necklaces, abdomen, navel, waist, elephant-skin loin cloth, tied tightly with a serpent, thighs, knees, calf, ankles, the upper surface of feet, toes, the lower surface or sole of the feet etc. In the case of Parvati, the beautifully knotted hair in the left front of the head, the breasts, the *rōma rāji* (the hair growing above the navel) and *tirvali* have to be shown, in addition to the silk-pleated apparel tied with gold-chain-hooked waist-band, necklaces, ear-rings, nose-screw, shoulder pieces, bangles, rings and anklets.

At the end of the dance he prostrates himself on the stage, paying obeisance to the deity, gets up, pays his respects to the spectators with clasped hands and turns back to return to the green room, when the drumming is stopped. The spectators clap their hands, symbolically blessing the actor.

The Pūrvaranga is thus concluded.

NOTES

1. The equipments and materials for *pūjā* are not real; their presence is imagined on the stage.
2. The *sloka* Sankhakshira, quoted here is the usual one taught for the first entry of a newly-initiated actor. It is from the Bhasa play *Balacharita*. In the case of other dramas, it is the opening *sloka* in the *sthapana* that is used for the commencement of the play.

II

KAILASODHARANAM AND PARVATIVIRAHAM

Ravana, after the ritualistic entrance and usual preliminary rites is seated in all splendour and begins gesticulation:

"One day after I had the usual bath, worship of my personal deity, breakfast, richly attired and fully decorated with all ornaments I proceeded to the audience chamber. I sat on the throne, in all royal dignity, spreading the white imperial umbrella over my crowned head, fanned with *venchamaram* and *alavattam* held on either side of my head a bit behind. My ministers and retinue paid obeisance to me and awaited my commands.

"I saw a messenger approaching me from far away. He prostrated before me and rose. Being permitted to talk, he was speaking thus, "O Rakshasa king! I carry a message to you from your elder brother Vaisravana. He ordered me to tell you, O Ravana, my dear brother, I hear a lot of complaints about you. I hear you punish the innocent, prevent the sages from conducting sacrifices and allow rakshasas to devour all men including great sages. You molest women. You catch hold of the wives of many other people and keep

them in your custody. These do not seem becoming of you, the son of the great sage Viśravas, and the younger brother of Vaisravana, the lord of the north. Release all prisoners, be a benevolent king of the *rakshasas*". I could not withstand the insult any longer. I flew into a rage and cut off the messenger's head.

"I was trembling with anger. I decided to punish Vaisravana's insolence. I ordered the minister, Prahasta, to get ready the army on our expedition to fight against Vaisravana.

"The *Rakshasa* heroes one by one come to the front, girded their loins, put on the armour, collected weapons such as sword and shield, trident, javelin, bows and arrows, and mended them so as to make them quite fit for use. They ordered their subordinates one by one to bring the elephants, the chariots, etc. and mount them. They marched ready for action. The army was preceded by an excellent orchestra consisting of different types of drums such as Chenda, Maddalam, Chenkila, heavy cymbals, Edakka, pipes of different shape and pitch, Timila etc. All members were served with betal leaves, nuts, *chunam* (lime) etc. for chewing. Spittoons were held before each one to spit the red saliva. The army marched forward itching for action.

"A terrible battle followed in Vaisravana's capital city between Rakshasas and Yakshas, led by me (Ravana) and Vaisravana. The latter was defeated. I held Vaiśravana by his hair and dragged him round and round and was about to cut off his head. Vaiśravana appeared extremely miserable and begged for mercy. I pushed him away. I caught hold of his Vimana, Pushpaka, and flew across the sky to return to Lanka.

"In mid-air Pushpaka was obstructed by a lofty mountain. I ordered Maricha to drive away the mountain. But it was in vain. He reported that the mountain would not budge an inch. It angered me. I approached the mountain. I examined it in all details. I estimated its height, width, depth. I looked on and on. I saw the peaks, the valleys, the clouds on the mountain top falling as rain, water flowing down in rills and rivulets, which in confluence turn into rivers flowing down, forming water falls, and winding rivers with ripples, whirlpool, sandbanks, etc. I saw huge trees with straight and curved branches, leaves, flowers, fruits, creepers encircling the trees, etc. I saw several animals such as the elephant, the lion, the tiger, the bear, etc. moving about freely enjoying life. I saw several birds such as the cuckoo, the parrot, the dove, the eagle, etc. I saw caves in which the lion takes shelter. I saw serpents and pythons. I should make this lofty mountain move and give room for my Pushpakam to move on without any hindrance. I must lift this mountain and throw it away."

So gesticulating, he strains all his nerves to lift the mountain.

(Parvati-Viraham is in continuation of Kailasoddharanam All gesticulation only.)

"Having lifted Mount Kailasa I tossed it into the air, held it in my left hand as it came down. Tossed it up again and held in my right hand. Tossed again higher by the right hand. After a while it returned and I held it in my left hand. Tossing the mountain higher and higher and holding it when it fell in one of my twenty hands. I waited for some time. As the mountain flew up very high and it disappeared in the sky, I decided to have a drink and snack. I commanded my attendant to bring them. He brought a peg full of intoxicating drink, cups and pungent beef steak. I poured the drink into the cups, drank, chewed the beef and steak enjoyed drinking." (He enacts the drinking spree.) Then I thought of

playing dice. The materials for the game of dice were brought as ordered. I went on playing, watching in between for the mountain's descent.

"As this was going on, on Mount Kailasa Shiva was seated with Parvati on his left thigh. He was watching her amorously; Parvati too, in an amorous mood, looked at the Lord from head to foot. Her eyes got stuck on Shiva's braided hair. And lo! what did she see? She watched for a while and pointed at his braid and enquired, "What do I see there?" Shiva, taken aback by the sudden and unexpected enquiry, thought a while and said, "O my beloved, it is water". Parvati: "Why? is it not a face?" Shiva, "No, it is a lotus." Parvati: "Why? I see curls of hair". Shiva, taken aback awhile, but regaining confidence: "Oh, they are bees that have come to drink honey." Parvati: "I see eyebrows there. Are they not eyebrows?" Shiva, though a bit perplexed, regaining composure: "They are ripples, Parvati". With strong suspicion about the veracity of her husband's reply: "I see two eyes there. Are they not eyes?" Shiva, much worried about the searching question, manages to say: "They are fish moving about in the water". Parvati, thoroughly dissatisfied with the explanation: "Why, don't I see two breasts?" Shiva, though appearing crestfallen, quickly recovers to answer "They are two *chakravakas*." Thoroughly dissatisfied, Parvati feels she is being cheated by her husband by having another woman as his wife clandestinely in his braid, accuses him of lack of fidelity, feels angry, sorrow-stricken, aggrieved and at length decides to go away from Shiva and live separately. "It was then that Mount Kailasa begins to be tossed by me."

(Ravana in the role of Parvati stands on a pedestal, posing herself as on the mountain, feels being tossed, losing her balance, strains every nerve to stand erect, but fails in spite of all efforts, her braid loosens, the long curly hair gets untied, falls loose, she tries to hold the hair in her left arm with much difficulty, the unsteadiness of her posture goes on increasing and then her attire gets loosened, she fears whether she may become naked and rushes to Shiva and embraces Him. Being unexpectedly overjoyed by the embrace the Lord experiences horripilation.) "On learning that I was tossing the mountain which led to such a happy conclusion of the quarrel between the god and goddess, Shiva blessed me and presented me with his divine sword Chandrahasta."

III

SUBHADRA DHANANJAYAM (ACT I, FIRST DAY)

Arjuna enters from behind the curtain, makes ritualistic obeisance to the *mizhavu* facing the same, then turns round in the stylized manner and faces the lamp, when the curtain is removed. He carefully watches and gradually becomes astonished and shows by the movement of the eyes (after holding his left upper arm just above the elbow by fingers of his right hand, and his right upper arm by the fingers of his left hand): "I am wonder-struck to see the butterflies move above the bright flames of the sacrificial fire and fall

into it, but instead of getting burnt they fly up again and again and fly about in glee. It is repeated again and again by the flies'. Looks again in another direction and enacts with his eyes, standing in the same posture as before, 'There I see the tigress allowing the doe calf to drink milk from its udders again and again and fondle the calf affectionately'. Looking in another direction, expresses astonishment and enacts with his eyes, 'There I see the baby elephant touching the canine teeth of the lion repeatedly mistaking them to be lotus-stems'. Looks again around and fixes his look at another point, expresses wonder and enacts with his eyes, 'There the mongoose likes very tenderly the young snake-child coaxing it to sleep as the latter feels sleepy'.

He looks at these scenes in detail once again and then recites, after signalling to stop drumming, without an expression of astonishment, "Iha hi" and continues:

Śikhini śalabhō jwālāchakrēna vikriyathē patan
Pibati bahuśah śārdūlīnām mṛgasabeakah
Sprśathi kalabhah saimhīm damṣṭrām mṛnālādhiyā
Muhurnayati nakulam nidrātāmṛm lihanahipōtakah

Then Arjuna recites the prose order of the stanza, line by line as given below: "Śalabhah Śikhini patan jwālā chakrē vikriyati". Gesticulates: 'Butterflies fly round and round and fall into the fire, burning brightly. Lo! they do not get burnt and instead rise from the fire with ease, unhurt. The falling of the butterflies into the flames and rising out of it alive perfectly unhurt is repeated. It is really wonderful.' Signals the drumming to stop. Recites the prose order of the next line of the stanza: "Mṛgaśabakamśārdūlīnām stanam pibati." Gesticulates: 'The deer calf is being fed with the milk in udder of the tigress, which caresses the calf with affection and goes on feeding and caressing it again and again. It is really astonishing'. Signals to stop drumming and recites the prose order of the second line again. Recites the prose order of the third line: "Kalabhah simhīm damṣṭrām muhuḥ sprśati". Gesticulates expressing wonder: 'The baby elephant touches the canine teeth of the lioness. Does it touch the lioness's canine tooth once only? No, no. The baby elephant touches the canine teeth of the lioness again and again and pulls them. Why does it do so? It mistakes the canine teeth to be lotus stalk. And so goes on touching and pulling the canine teeth'. Signalling the drum to stop, recites the prose order of the third line of the stanza. Then recites the prose order of the fourth line of the stanza: "Ahi pōtakah nakulam lihan nidratandrīm nayati". "And then gesticulates: 'The young one of the snake is being coaxed to sleep as it feels sleepy by the mongoose by licking it tenderly. It is really surprising the creatures that are enemies by nature are friendly here; nay, they help each other with unlimited love and compassion. It is all because of the greatness of the penance performed by the great sages occupying this hermitage and surrounding forest areas. Extremely astonishing. The Virtue and greatness of the sages are beyond measure and description. One cannot but wonder to witness such a scene beside the hermitage. Signals to stop drumming and recites the latter two lines of the stanza: "Sprsati kalabhah Saimhīm damshtram. . ." etc. Looks around and gesticulates, 'No one is seen here'. Signals to stop drumming and says: "Ayē Sarvairēva Sastri- bālai munibhi

mādhyaṃdinasavanasnānāya Prabhāsatīrtham prati pracalitaiḥ, śūnyīkṛtōyam asrama bhagaḥ! Sakha ca mē Kaundinya kansīdyādadyāpi addhwani mandāyate. Thadadhunā nikashātāpō Vanamavasthitasya asya Vaṭa viṭapinah pracchāyē pratikṣhiṣṭyē vayasyāgamanam". In continuation, gesticulates the meaning of the words uttered as: 'All people here such as women and children along with the sages must have gone to take the ritualistic bath at noon and perform compulsory worship ordained to be observed. They have gone to the holy Prabhasa Tirtha. So this hermitage and surroundings seem desolate. My companion and friend Kaundinya, due to lack of enthusiasm, must be plodding on the way slowly. Blistering heat is felt. I shall remain in the cool shade of the wild banyan tree beside the hermitage and wait for Kaundinya to join me.' He gesticulates the words spoken above and enacts reaching the cool shade of the tree. He listens to the voice heard from the Nepathyam, gesticulates the idea of the words heard and signals to stop drumming and says: "Ayē kaundinyasijē vayam bhikṣhāyāchana swomah". Gesticulates and awaits the arrival of Kaundinya, the Vidushaka. He terminates the action, and concludes the performance ritualistically.

IV

NAGANANDAM V (ACT II, SECOND DAY: NIRVAHANAM—
NARRATION OF THE PREVIOUS EVENTS BY THE HERO JIMUTAVAHANA)

Jimūtavahana enters the stage from behind the curtain, pays obeisance to the drum in the stylized manner and turns around (kalyam Vachu tiriyukain the stylized manner). He looks at the audience carefully, pays respect in the *kamalaparivartana* style and begins *Anukramam*, i.e. goes backward in the narration of the story by raising questions inquisitively.

Anukramam

Once upon a time in the distant past Jimutavahana met Malayavati in the hermitage where Gouri had done penance earlier. How did he become lovesick on seeing Malayavati? Prior to that how did Jimutavahana come to Malaya mount in order to build a hermitage where he happened to see the hermitage of Gouri? Before that, being ordered by his father, Jimutaketu, how did he move on to build a hermitage with his friend Vidushaka named Athreya? Before that, Jimutavahana entrusted the administration of the kingdom to his ministers in order to go to the forest to serve his parents? Prior to that, how did Jimutavahana go to the celestial world and bring down the *kalpaka* tree to the earth so that all the needs of the needy people could be met by the very presence of the tree, which gave everything that is desired by the needy? Prior to that, how did Jimutaketu entrust the administration of the kingdom to his son, Jimutavahana, who had become a grown-up personality, and how did the former with his wife Mahapunya retire to the forest and do penance? How did Jimutaketu happen to be born earlier? Before that, how did a town for the occupation of Vidyadharas come into existence on the peak of the Himalaya mountain? Prior to that, how did Himalaya mountain come to existence?

After going through the historical background in reverse in this manner, he looks at the spectators carefully and makes obeisance to them in the *kamalaparivartanam* style.

Samkshepam (Summary of Events)

"Long long ago, at the end of the deluge, Brahma, the creator, was born in the lotus-flower that blossomed on the plant growing from the navel of Sri Narayana. Brahma performed penance and obtained sufficient strength and capacity to create the three worlds, the celestial world, the earth, and the nether world. He created the celestial devas in the celestial world; man, animals and birds on the earth/serpents and asuras (demons) in the nether world. When creation was going on in the northern part of the earth, Himavan mountain came into being. Then the actor looks at the spectators, pays obeisance in *kamalaparivartanam* style and begins *Nirvahanam*, the narration.

He looks at the huge mountain in the stylized manner and begins a description of its features such as its height, width, peaks, the table-land the valleys, the trees with their branches, leaves, flowers, fruits etc, the rills flowing down the peaks, joining together to form the river, the water-falls, confluences, the rapid flow, the ripples, waves, banks, sand beds, caves in the mountains, the lion, the tiger, the elephants, the deer, the bear, etc exhibiting their activities.

Among the rivers there appears Ganga from the top of the mountains. It is a very charming locality beside the starting point of Ganga. This mountain is the father of *Sripavati*. The celestials and demons equally respect Himavan and pay obeisance to this king of the mountains. This is an area full of virtues, with no evils.

And then the actor signals the drums to stop and the Nangiar recites the *sloka*, beginning "*Astyasthadoshonijamurdhasangi. . .*". The actor continues narration by gesticulation: 'On the top of that mountain a kingdom came to exist for the residence of the celestial *Vidyadharas*. The capital city of the kingdom was extremely attractive, How?' He describes the capital city in all details such as *gopurams* (towers), huge walls enclosing the city, the moat around the fort, bathing centres, places of worship, audience chambers, assembly halls, the stables where elephants and horses are kept, the wide roads for the chariots to move, public gardens, retiring rooms in the garden enclosed with creepers, residential houses with multiple storeys, etc.

'In that capital city *Vidyadhara* kings lived and ruled the *Vidyadhara* kingdom. In the royal family was born *Jimutaketu* who became famous, who defeated all his enemies and established his superiority over all. He was a benevolent king. He ruled over the *Vidyadhara* kingdom in the same way as *Indra* ruled over the celestial world.'

The actor signals to stop drumming and the Nangiar recites the *sloka*, enacted, "*Tasya cha lochanasya. . . .*" etc. Then the actor resumes, gesticulating: 'When *Jimutaketu* was ruling the kingdom, one day, the king had his early bath, prayers and meal. He attired himself in royal robes and head-gear and entered the royal assembly. He sat on the throne, had the white silk umbrella held above, was fanned by *venchamaram*, *alavattoms* were held on either side as the royal paraphernalia. His ministers and attendants along with the common subjects paid obeisance to him. The king enquired of his ministers: 'Can you find a bride to marry me?' Then they saw a messenger approaching the assembly hall. They

listened to the messenger's speech. The actor gesticulates 'What does the messenger say? The *Swayamvara* of the Vidyadhara princess Mahapunya is to take place. Does the messenger say that I am invited to participate in the *swayamvara* and that he has come to escort me to the *Swayamvaramandapa*. Good Jimutaketu set off with the royal entourage, reached the *swayamvara* mandapa and got married to Mahapunya and returned to his kingdom. They lived pleasantly and in course of time a prince was born to the royal Vidyadhara couple, and he was named Jimutavahana. What about the prince? He was quite charming and handsome.' The actor signals stopping of drumming and the Nangiar recites: "Tasya putro bhavachsrman. . ." etc. As it was thought Jinadeva himself has incarnated as the prince the latter was named Jimutavahana. He was born to do all favours people expected of him. Moreover he was compassionate to all living beings. The actor stops to the drumming. The Nangiar recites "Bodhan Sthithali, etc." Continuing his gesticulation: 'Jimutaketu was extremely happy to see the boy's face. He conducted *jatakarma*, *namakarana*, *annaprasana*, etc of the prince. In course of time he became adept in the various branches of knowledge to which he was exposed. As the ocean is the respectable for all waters, the prince became the receptacle of all branches of knowledge. What is the nature of the knowledge he mastered? All knowledge to be mastered necessarily by the Vidyadharas in depth and detail. Nay, he became the receptacle of all wealth and growth, all the rare and wonderful objects, splendour, grandeur, and spiritual and material powers. When the drum stops the Nangiar recites the *sloka* "Sa bāla eva" etc. Gesticulation continues. 'All the arts brightened in the prince's mind, as the *Kalas* grow in the moon in the bright phase of the month. What can we say about his mental constitution? Alive with the brightness of all the knowledge acquired, learned in everything that is to be mastered. He was the seat of all goodwill and good wishes of the Vidyadhara population, very sharp in intelligence.' Stopping the drumming, the Nangiar recites "Adhitasastre" etc.

'As he acquired knowledge and was getting mentally well-equipped, his physical features too acquired additional beauty and charm of youth. How was it? His physical charm grew as the fire with added oblations grows brighter with flames rising higher and higher. All eyes of the Vidyadharas became fixed on his enchanting bodily features. His body emitted the glow of *kalpavriksha*, with the brilliance of the ornaments he wore in order to enhance his natural beauty with ruddy hue.' The drum stops followed by recitation by the Nangiar "Tasyakramat", etc. Gesticulation continues: 'Jimutaketu observed his son closely and thought: 'My son is a grown-up young man, well-accomplished. I must entrust the kingdom to him and retire to the forest to perform penance. He transferred the administration of the kingdom to his son along with *Kalpavriksha*. Fully satisfied, he has done his duty to his entire satisfaction. Jimutaketu left for the forest where he controlled all his senses and got engaged in penance'. Signalling to stop drumming, recitation of the *sloka* "Atha Sapatha sathai," etc. by the Nangiar.

'After his parents went away to do penance Jimutavahana, consequent on his unlimited affluence, used to go to Mount Kailash in the night, Mount Mandara at sunrise and Mount Malaya at sunset in the *Vimana* of Megha (the cloud) and offer prayers. He lived in the

company of all his relatives'. Signalling to stop drumming, the Nangiar recites the *sloka* "Nasayam Kailasam" etc.

Gesticulation continues: 'As Jimutavahana was observing his daily routines strictly, by lavish expenditure of all wealth on those who begged for it, he became short of money and in order to replenish he went to Mahameru, cut a lot of gold blocks from it and showered gold pieces everywhere. Still, the young Vidyadhara Jimutavahana was very patient and clear-minded. Moreover he was engaged in holy activities always'. Signalling to stop drumming the Nangiar recites the *sloka* "Sa kshanthiman" etc.

Continuing as Amatya (Minister) the actor gesticulates: 'noble prince, as you are on the move in search of wealth, enemies are on the lookout for an opportunity to destroy our kingdom. And so you should put a stop to your travels.' So said the very intelligent minister Sumati. Signals to stop drumming. The *sloka* "Varayamasa Sumati", etc. is recited by the Nangiar. As Minister the actor continues gesticulating: "noble prince, when you give gifts, it is not proper to stop you from doing it. Still I am constrained to advise you. Enemies who wait for a chance will not pick a quarrel with you when their position is weak and you are engaged in the distribution of gifts," Signalling to stop drumming, the Nangiar recites "Avāraṇi-yakhalu dana silatha etc. . ." Gesticulates: 'the seat of all virtues, treasures are kept readily available at your palaces. As if bound by strong chains they are protected by serpents. They are as dark as the rainbearing clouds.' Signals to stop drumming; the *sloka* beginning, "Vishadharairmigalai. . ." is recited by the Nangiar. The Minister gesticulates: 'O noble prince, as your elephants stand in the courtyard, paved with precious gems, seeing their own images on the floor, they touch them quickly with the tips of their trunks and mistake them for enemies (elephants) and angrily causing the liquid flow from the temples of the rutting elephants'. Signals to stop drumming. The Nangiar recites the *sloka* beginning, "Taveha. . ." etc". Gesticulation goes on: 'O noble prince, you may distribute all the riches available in your father's palace. But don't lose this kalpavriksha. This kalpavriksha is capable of protecting the royal dynasty. And so don't gift this tree away to beggars who may seek it as a gift. It is not to be gifted away'. Stops drumming to recite the *sloka* beginning "Ithi yat" etc. Gesticulation continues: 'This kalpavrksha has stout, hefty, broad hands in the form of branches which hold creepers climbing over them. Those golden creepers bear bunches of flowers as well as leaves appearing similar to precious stones. They appear as if they are ready to satisfy the needs of the beggars who beg for their possession'. Drumming, stops, and the Nangiar recites the *sloka* "Muktaphala" etc. Gesticulates: 'You are the gem in the Vidyadhara community. You should not part with the kalpavrksha, but may give away everything else when all the wealth is spent, this kalpavrksha will yield riches'. Signals to stop drumming; the Nangiar recites the *sloka* beginning "Ityadbhudaspa. . ." etc.

Then the actor occupies the seat as Jimutavahana and considers the words spoken by the minister and examines all aspects of the question. He concludes: 'The tree which my Minister is particular to preserve should be put to the use of those who are bereft of riches and also the beggars' After gesticulating the preceding words he signals to stop drumming and the Nangiar recites 'Viratha Vacasi' etc.

Again he speculates over the question and gesticulates: 'The "kalpavrksha" handed

over to me by my father when he went away in order to perform penance, should be kept on the earth'. The actor gets down, acts as if he is moving in the sky (ambarayanam) reaches the celestial world and speaks to *Kalpavrksa*: "*Kalpavrksa*, you move on from the celestial world to the earth. When you move on to reach the earth, your anklets should be silent. You should prevent the flow of precious gems, dew-drops, and cold water. In addition to these you should prevent the Rajahamsa (kingly swan couples) from producing any sound". He signals the drumming to stop and the Nangiar recites the *sloka* beginning "Gamasmalbhaja" etc. Then gesticulates: 'O *kalpavrksa*, there are many on the earth who are devoid of eyesight, stricken with disease, lame men and women. They are unable to approach you and beg for riches. So you should spread your branches upto a distance of one thousand yojanas'. Signals to stop drumming and the Nangiar recites: 'Jaramaya piditha' etc. 'Accordingly *Kalpavrksa* moved down from heaven to earth, as desired by Jimutavahana'. This is gesticulated, followed by the recital of the *sloka* beginning "Apeta. . ." etc. After he descends on the earth Jimutavahana follows it and plants it on the earth. "What about Jimutavahana? He shone like an ornament on the earth because of qualities exposing his virtue. He was the seat of unlimited compassion. What about *kalpavrksa*? Whatever was desired by beggars at once reached them by the grace of the divine tree. The minister Sumati was directed to administer the kingdom, Jimutavahana want to see his parents along with his friend and companion Atreya. He met his father and mother in the forest and prostrated at their feet. He rose and stood politely beside them. "Sa Bhūmau sam sthapyā . . ." etc is recited Jimutaketu, seated, saw his son's face and expressing deep love, told him, 'My boy, firewood, flowers and grass in this area are completely exhausted by constant and continuous use. So it is necessary to build another hermitage away from here. You do it.' Signals to stop drumming. The Nangiar recites, "Upayukta Samit. . ." etc. Then the contents of the entire text of the first act has to be enacted in all detail as Nirvahanam.

V

ASCHARYACHUDAMANI:
ACT III, MAYA SITANKAM—

Sita compelling Lakshmana to go in Search of Rama who went chasing the golden deer

The curtain is held close to the lamp by two attendants after the beating of the drum Mizhavu, technically known as *mizhavu occhapetuttal*.

Enter Sita and Lakshmana from the *nepathya* (green room) by the door to the left behind the stage. They stand facing the Mizhavu and pay ritualistic obeisance to the instrument, turn round in a stylized manner, face the stage, Sita on the right side and Lakshmana on the left. After looking at the spectators in a stylized way, Sita feels her right eye indicates ill omens, shows the sign to stop the drumming and says in Prakrit. "Kumara, Aasannam virya Asohanam Dānim dakkhinons mei Akkhi manthēd" (*in Sanskrit*, 'Kumara, Āsannamiva āsobhanam idānīm ḍakṣiṇam mei akṣi mantrayātē) and

shows gestures explaining the words: 'My boy, now a misfortune is about to befall. I am going to become the victim of the misfortune. The sudden movement in my right eye is foretelling a dangerous situation, in which I am to get involved'. Then she signals the drumming to stop and repeats the words again.

Lakshmana moves into action by signalling the drums to stop and recites the *sloka* in Chetipanchamam: "Dāyāda Sādhārana Vasthu Vandhyam Vanāntam Asmākam upāsrihānām, Asōbhanam nāma Kimavyavasthām Yatra Sriyah Sthathra nanudvishanthah". The meaning of the *sloka* is explained in detail by gestures as follows: 'O my revered sister-in-law, where there is an occasion for several people to show keen desire to possess a particular object, there occurs an opportunity for the genesis of a dangerous situation. But in this forest there is no such enchanting object. Away from our native land and cut off from those who are near and dear to us, we have come to perform *tapas* (penance). So there is no reason why misfortune should befall us. Therefore we need not worry about any sorrowful situation we may find ourselves in. There are areas where ill-behaved women may live. There will be enemies in those areas'. After enacting as detailed above, Lakshmana recites the *sloka* again after signalling to stop drumming.

The drumming is stopped and Sita Says in Prakrit: "Kumara, ici padininam Vadanādō Sudam mayē, atthi vissudō Vimsadi bhuyō thumhehim hadānom Khara Dūṣanāṇam bhatha tthi (in Sanskrit 'Kumara, Rshipatnīnām Vadanāt srutam mayā, asti Visruto vimsati bhujo Yusmābhir hatayōh Khara Dūṣaṇanyorbhrata.')

The passage is enacted in detail with necessary elaborate gesticulation as follows: 'O Lakshmana, while I was in the forest in the company of the sages' wives, they told me: 'Khara, Dushana etc., are killed by you. But remember they have a brother who has conquered all the three worlds and is well-known as a hero, unequalled, named Ravana. He has twenty arms'. Signalling the drums to stop, she recites the speech once again.

Ravana, in disguise as Rama (known as Mayā Rama standing behind on a pedestal, signifying his movement in the sky, technically termed *ambarayanam* recites: "Dishtyaaham anaya sruta pūrvah" and shows gestures for the same as: 'Providentially, my eminence is already known to her.' Signals drumming to stop and recites the words again. Lakshmana begins recitation after signalling the drumming to stop: 'Āryē, alam asmād udwēgēna,' and shows gestures in explanation as follows: 'O my Revered sister-in-law, you need not be afraid of him (Ravana)'. Signalling to stop drumming he recites the words again. And then Ravana (Maya Rama) signals the drumming to stop and recites: "Kim na Khalu Vaksyati?." and shows gestures: 'What does he say?' and repeats the words orally. Lakshmana, signalling the drumming to stop, recites: "Na bāhavah pramanam paurashasya" and shows gestures: 'O my revered sister-in-law, possession of a number of arms is not an indication of heroism. If one has a large number of arms, he need not be considered quite heroic by other people. Why?' Signalling the drumming to stop, he repeats the words. Stopping drumming, he says, "pasya" and gesticulates 'you may consider', and then again signalling drumming to stop repeats the word "pasya". And then he recites in Chētīpanchamam the *sloka*,

'Yēna sōyam api Rāvanōjita

Stam sahasrabhujam Arjunam muniḥ
 Hōma sādhanā vidhāna karmaṇāḥ
 Vyacchinat parasunēva sākḥinam.

He continues explanation, showing gestures: 'Oh my Revered sister-in-law, possession of many arms is of no use. Why? All celestials led by Indra were defeated by Rāvana as the latter possesses twenty arms. That Ravana was easily defeated by Kārttaviryārrjuna who had one thousand arms holding weapons in all of them. But the mighty Kārttaviryārrjuna alongwith all his relatives was killed by sage Parasurāma, who possessed only two arms and with the one axe he held in his hand as if he was cutting firewood for his sacrificial fire. So the number of arms one possesses is not a true indication of ones heroism'. Signalling to stop drumming, the *sloka* is recited again. Ravana in the guise of Rama (Maya Rama), signalling the drumming to stop, recites: "Smara, manushya tavēdam vachanam" and gesticulates: 'O, silly man, remembering these words clearly, fully well, get prepared to work hard to escape from the sorrows you are going to suffer; I will make you realise the fruits of the insults you have thrown on me'. He repeats the words again after signalling the drum to stop.

The drumming goes on, stops, and words are heard uttered from the Nepathyam (green room, symbolic of Rama's words): "Ha, Lakshmana". Sita hears the same and gesticulates: 'What do I hear? Alas! Lakshmana, is it so I heard?' Signalling to stop drumming, She says sorrowfully, "Hum, ayya vuttha Ssa viya saro". She continues: "Alas! it is similar to my husband's voice"; and gesticulates. Signalling to stop drumming, the words are repeated. Lakshmana, signalling to stop drumming, recites: "Aryē, Kim artaswaram Aryah karōti?" and gesticulates: 'O my revered sister-in-law, my eldest brother won't cry in sorrow-laden voice', and recites the words again, Sita, gesticulating to stop drumming, recites: Thuvam, kim, tthi, thakkesi?" ('tvam kim iti tharkayasi'). Sita gesticulates: 'O Lakshmana, what do you think?' She repeats the words orally. Lakshmana recites: "Māyēti", he gesticulates: 'It is untrue, magic, I believe' he recites the words again. Ravana (Maya Rama) recites: "Aho, Dhrshtah, Khalvishah" and gesticulates: 'Wonderful, He is not so simple. He has firm conviction'. Stopping drumming, Ravana (Maya Rama) repeats the words. Sita: "Bālisa, thadōvi rakshidavvo" (Bālisha, thathōpi; rakshitavyō" and gesticulates: 'You are ignorant; still you must protect him'. Stopping drumming by signalling, she recites the words again.

Lakshmana, stopping drumming, by signalling, recites: "Katham, Rakshyō rakshati". He gesticulates, 'O revered sister-in-law, my eldest brother protects all others. How can we believe he is afraid of someone else? Is it not derogatory? I fear you do not fully realise your husband's greatness and might. Even if he is in a dangerous position, how can I protect him? What my brother is incapable of doing cannot be done by anyone else. That is my firm conviction'. Signalling to stop drumming, he repeats his words. After drumming, words are heard from *nepathyam* (green room), symbolic of Rama's utterances: 'Kim vilambasē?'. Listening to the words, Sita recites: "Khala bhadriṇo apannassa akkanditham, uvaikha, mānom, thumamkham bhayavadi puhavi sahedī?" ('Khala, bhratrāpannasyā kranditam upekshamanam tvām katham Bhagavati Prthvi sahatē?') Sita angrily gesticulates: 'O hard-hearted man, having heard the piteous cry of

your revered eldest brother you stand unmoved. How can mother earth suffer you?' Signalling to stop drumming, Sita recites the words again.

Lakshmana recites: "Aryē, kim tvaya thatheiveti nischitam?" in the interrogative form; he gesticulates; 'Revered sister-in-law, Are you sure what you heard now is the voice of your husband?' On stopping drumming, he recites the sentence again. After drumming "Kim, na sṛnoṣi, Lakshmana?" is heard from nepathyam; Sita hears the words and gesticulates: 'What do I hear? O Lakshmana, don't you hear those words? Is it not so?' She signals to stop drumming, recites: 'Sumahi, Lakkhana, Kim na thurayasi? Hoddhee, Anantharagamani, ithiayanam lacchi, na hu kim na thwarasi? (Ha, dhik anantharagamin sthreenam Lakshmi nakhalwa ham, Ekam thamēva)'. Sita angrily gesticulates: 'You hear me; why you do not move out quickly, I am fully convinced of it. It is really despicable! Being eager to possess the kingdom without any claim and also bent upon possessing me without any rival to claim me, in order to enjoy life fully, you stand here steadfast without moving. Mind you, among ladies Lakshmi alone keeps company with all and is accessible to any one who approaches her with humility and consideration. I will not live in the company of any man other than my beloved husband whom I have accepted in *swayamvara* in the presence of my elders and whom I treat as my external self. You must understand me fully well now'. Sita recites the sentences uttered earlier once again. After signalling to stop the drumming, Lakshmana closes his ears with the palms, terror-stricken and dismayed, signals stopping of drumming and utters: "Śāntam pāpam; Śāntam pāpam" and continues reciting *slokas* in Chetipanchamam;

Api mām vijalpasi gabhīradhiyām
Prathamā satī yadavicārya calā
Tadupasthitha tava vipanniyatam
Parivartate prakṛtirāpadi hi

He gesticulates: 'My Revered sister-in-law, don't speak in such a bad manner. You are really great and not a silly common woman. Among the women famous for their chastity like Arundhati etc. you are the topmost. Such a chaste and great woman should not have spoken ill of me as I have been from my birth holding high the prestige of both the families in which my mother and father were born. As you have already spoken ill of me, it portends misfortune to you, I am sure of it. When misfortune is to befall, the mind loses balance.' After signalling the stopping of drumming, he recites the *sloka* again. Signalling to stop drumming, Ravana utters: "Mudha, tvam na janīshe. Sampadupasthithā Vana vasa pariklishtāyāh", and gesticulates: 'You fool, to this woman who suffers endlessly in the forest and is put to all sorts of grievous experiences, no misfortunes are to befall. She is going to become rich by all means. You are unable to know it.' Signalling the stopping of drumming Ravana repeats the words he uttered earlier.

Again drumming followed by the utterance from the Nepathyam (green-room): "Ha hathōsmi"; Sita hears the words and gesticulates: 'What do I hear? Sita, Lakshmana, I am killed. Is it so?', signals stopping of drumming and recites: "Mukkha, Sunāhi Lakkhana, aham thava puradō marissom. Pachā nirāso dānim bhadunō sayāsamgamissassi. (Mūrkhā, Śṛṇu Lakshmana, aham thava puratō mariṣyē. Pascān nirāsa idānim

bhratuh sakāśam gamishyasi.') Sita gesticulates: 'You fool, Lakshmana, hear me. I will die now in your presence. Then you will be disappointed in the non-fulfilment of your evil designs and proceed to your eldest brother'. Signalling to stop drumming, Sita recites the earlier speech once again. Lakshmana turns himself into a picture of sorrow and recites in Dukkha-gandharam: 'Avivēkam anāvekshyama Adākshinyam anūrjitam Dhigaham janma nārīnām yanmāmēvam prabhashasē', and gesticulates: 'Oh my revered sister-in-law, you are insulting me so. You know a lot about my character and behaviour by hearing me and witnessing my activities. You have forgotten everything concerning my character and conduct, it appears evidently. Yours is an adventurous move, without proper consideration of the situation, facts and future that await you as a result of your ill-advised plan. You are insulting me without making a thorough study of the situation and the events that have occurred. You have lost your balance of mind. Consequent on your insulting me so much I conclude women as a whole are not dependable'. So gesticulating, Lakshmana signals to stop drumming and recites the *sloka*.

Sita angrily stops drumming and says: "Thuvam dāva sāhu hōhi" ('Twam tāvat sadhurbhava') and gesticulates: 'Let me become the butt of ridicule. You do as you wish and become a personification of nobility'. Sita signals to stop the drumming and repeats her words once again. Lakshmana, filled with sorrow, thinks over and raises the question, 'What am I to do?' within him and then recites in Dukkha-gandharam: 'Māyā vidheya vapuṣām nava vairabhājām viśfama vesmani vanē rajanicharanam ajnām guroraganayan avivekalolām ekākinīm kathamaham bhavāthīm thyajāmi.'

Lakshmana gesticulates: 'Oh, my revered sister-in-law, how can I go away leaving you here all alone. Why? In the capital city you lived always along with your husband or other relatives in their immediate presence. Can such a chaste and noble woman be left all alone here, now, immediately after the annihilation of a large number of Rakshasas led by Khara, in an area close to the abode of cruel Rakshasas, especially in this forest where there is no human being moving about? Having seen a deer, without learning the reality about the animal, you have encouraged your husband to go hunting the animal. Now, on hearing a piteous cry, without proper consideration of facts and the situation in which we are, you are telling me to go to the rescue of your husband, who you feel is in danger because of your wrong estimation of the great heroism of your husband. Without knowing the reality, how can I leave you, the great personification of chastity, alone here and go away?' Then Lakshmana signals the drummer to stop and recites the *sloka* again.

Sita signals stopping of drumming recites: "Samāhī. rakhadi itthiyāyanam, na bānā" ('Samādhi rakṣati strījanam na bānāḥ') and gesticulates: 'Their firm convictions protect women. Arrows do not protect them'. Signalling to stop drumming Sita repeats the words. Lakshmana signals stopping of drumming, says in great sorrow: "Dēvāḥ fināsyanti, Dēvāḥ sāksīnāḥ" and gesticulates: 'The celestials (Devas) know all these and they are the witnesses. As compelled by my sister-in-law I go, violating the orders of my eldest brother, leaving my revered sister-in-law alone. I am not at fault. The celestials know everything. They witness everything that takes place'.

Signalling to stop drumming Lakshmana repeats his words. Sita says "Hodavvam" (Bhavithavyam) and gesticulates: 'Let it be so' and repeats the expression. Lakshmana

prostrates before Sita and says "Namastubhyam". He takes his bow and draws a line on the ground with the bow's end. He gesticulates: 'Revered sister-in-law, may I go. Please stay here safely'. He moves on in the *kalappurattu* style (the stylized walking), and terminates his action. Sita too moves on to the *nepathyam* terminating her action.

VI

ACHARYACHŪDANI ACT VII

Production manual for Scene X:

Lakshmana's report to Sri Rama of the Agnipravesam of Sita

Ascharya Lakshmana has the usual make-up and additionally red flower garlands tied to the *kuzhal* (top) of his headgear and over his chest ornaments. Red *Chettu* flowers should decorate his face. All over his body tiny balls of cotton are fixed to represent horripilation consequent on the experience of astonishment. As Lakshmana expresses unlimited astonishment on seeing Sita coolly entering into the brightly burning fire and coming out later unscathed.

The curtain is held by two attendants, drumming goes on, and behind the curtain Lakshmana appears, expressing uncontrollable astonishment and joy, moving with rhythmic steps, keeping time clapping palms and uttering "ascharyam, ascharyam" repeatedly in glee. He walks round behind the curtain. As the curtain is removed, he turns round and faces the audience in the stylized manner technically known as *Kaliyamvacchu tiriya*. Extreme astonishment is expressed, and he moves on in the stylized manner. There must be showering of flowers from above and the entry technique should be shown thrice. He signals to stop drumming and utters "ascharyam, ascharyam", clasps his palms rhythmically and jumps and dances strictly keeping the rhythm. On ending this show Lakshmana signals the drumming to stop and recites: 'Prasidatvarya, ascharyam, ascharyam and gesticulates. 'Save me brother, wonderful, wonderful'. Rama, already seated, signals to stop drumming and asks: "Vatsa, Lakshmana, mēghantaracaram api te jītavatō meghanādam Indrajitam na kantakiā gātrayaṣṭih kathaya, kathaya kutastyōyam āvēgah". Gesticulates: 'Oh, my dear boy, Lakshmana, moving within the thick clouds and roaring terribly like thunder Meghanada, that is Indrajit, fought against you and you killed him. But even at that moment of glorious victory you did not show such joy. Now I see you are bristling out in uncontrolled joy. Why is it? Tell me, tell me, I beseech you'. Rama signals to stop drumming and repeats his words uttered earlier.

Lakshmanan, signalling to stop the drumming, recites: "Āryapādasya śāsanā, tīrē maharṇavasya sasara darunikareih sandhukithō "jātāvēdāh" and gesticulates: 'Oh, my revered brother, as ordered by you I dug a very deep and wide pit on the seashore. I put firewood in it and set fire to it. I added a lot of firewood and made it burn with high flames and emit terrible heat'. Lakshmana signals to stop the drumming and repeats his words once again orally.

Rama, signalling the drumming to stop recites 'Iathasthatha" and gesticulates: 'And then' Lakshmana recites: "Tatah sā tam sanvartam pāvakamiva pāvakam abhijwalantam

trih ārya paryanaīṣīt” and gesticulates: ‘Then my revered sister-in-law (emulating Sita) bathed and held her flowing long locks over her arm and circumabulated the terrible fire burning as though to consume the entire universe, thrice’. He signals the drumming to stop and repeats his words once again.

Rama recites, “Thathasthatha” and gesticulates ‘And then’. Lakshmana recites “Tataḥsā khalu devī”, personifying himself as Sita, and continues recital, “Tvam Ayōdhyā jusham, gurujanam ca pranamya śirasā mām apyēvam guru vacanakarōbhavēt utyktwa Bharata Satrugṇnābhyām ēvam ēva kathayēthi covāca.” In continuation he gesticulates: ‘That Dēvi, the divine woman, consequent on her stay in Lanka which is ruled over by rakshasas (demons), feeling extremely aggrieved as if she has fallen in the ocean of sorrow, with much effort, felt she has escaped from all ordeals and sought refuge at the feet of her protector, that is you, yourself (so she appeared to me). I repented our cruel words uttered over her in her very presence earlier. But Dēvi, the noble lady did not care for the insults showered on her and she appeared cool, calm and collected. With great reverence to you and all the elders in Ayodhya she paid obeisance by kneeling and touching the earth by her head. I was wonderstruck on witnessing the action, revealing how great a soul she is. Then she told me: “Lakshmana, you too respect the elders by all means”. I had insulted her and spoken ill of her earlier. But I was wonderstruck to see she had not the least feeling of anger or hatred towards me. Even now she has no ill-feeling towards me. Really wonderful. Is it not? Then she asked me to tell Bharata and Satrugṇa to implicitly obey their elders and act as per the directions of elders. She added that this message should be conveyed to them as her special wish.

Signalling to stop drumming he recites: “Atha tayēdam ukthamcha” and gesticulates: ‘and then my revered sister-in-law spoke to me so’. He signals the drumming to stop and recites: “Bhagavān Agnē, tava purastāt satyādhiṣṭhanam kariṣyāmi. Prasthānakāle rākṣasabhūja samsparṣaḥ Samvṛta, padasparśamca Lankāyām iti; nirviśankam jalām iva jalasatrum āviṣat”. Lakshmana gesticulates: ‘Bhagavan, O Lord Agnē, in your presence I utter the absolute truth. When I was lifted by force by Ravana, I happened to be in contact with Ravana’s hand and so was subjected to *rakshasa*’s touch by hand. In Lanka he prostrated before me when he touched my feet. So saying, least concerned about the well-being of her body, fearlessly, in great joy, like one subjected unbearable heat enters cold water to cool one’s body, she entered into the wildly burning fire. That act generated unlimited astonishment in me.’ Signalling to stop drumming, Lakshmana repeats his words.

Sri Rama stops the drummer and recites: “Vismayapadametat. Tatastatha ” and gesticulates: ‘All this is really astonishing. And then what followed?’ enquires Rama. Lakshmana says: “Tadānim ākāśe pravṛttāḥ samkṣhapatehah” and gesticulates: ‘And then *Śankh* (conches) and *patshas*’ (drums) produced sounds in the sky, perhaps by the wonderstruck celestials’. Signalling the drumming to stop, Lakshmana repeats his words once again. Rama says “Tatastatah” and gesticulates, ‘and then’.

Lakshmana says “Tathastadānīm”, and recites the *śloka* in anam: “ Stimitā nayanam arātpaśyatām na samantādvayatikaram ivarūpam vidyutāmādadhanah avanibhuvam anindyāmtē purōdhāya dēvīmamara vadanamāvirdevatā vahnirāsīt” Lakshmana

gesticulates, expressing unlimited wonder: 'We stood with eyes wide open and still without taking note of our presence, nay simply ignoring us, Lord Agni, who is the mouth of the celestials, receives oblations offered in the fire meant to the different celestials, more brilliant than a huge collection of lightnings bound together, appeared in person, asking the absolutely innocent better half of yours, who was born out of the furrow in the earth ploughed for sacrificial purpose and so is the very personification of innocence and virtue, to move as the vanguard and made his holy presence'. After signalling the drumming to stop he repeats the *sloka*.

Rama signals to stop the drumming and utters: "Tatastath" gesticulating 'then', and repeats the words. Lakshmana signals the drumming to stop and says "Tathā khalu" and recites the *sloka* in Danam: "Vēlā vanē kusumitan virahayya vrksham kalmāshitam khan alipamktibhirudgathā bhiḥ ayamavatyamara pādapa puṣpa vṛṣṭiḥ agrē sthitā sapadi havyabhujasthirōbhūt" He gesticulates: 'And then the bees sucking honey from the flowers in the trees in the forest on the seacoast left them, flew away to great heights, and their assembly made the sky quite dark. The fragrant flowers showering down the celestial plants that attracted the bees fell torrentially, continuously, on the head of Sita who was standing in front of Agni for long. Agni disappeared without much delay'. Signalling the drumming to stop, Lakshmana repeats the *sloka*. Sri Rama signals the drumming to stop and says: 'Bhavatu drakṣyāmayḥ tāvāt' and gesticulates: "Sita is absolutely innocent. We shall go to see her'. And then signals the drumming to stop repeats his words. Rama and Lakshmana move on with stylized steps and turn round to face spectators. Drumming abates and from *Nepathym* the following is heard in token of singing by Gandharvas in *Veladhuli*:

Lōkanām yah trithayam udarādhāram
 āpādyā yogat-
 Ambho rasau viṣadhara mayīm dhīram
 adhyāstha śayyām
 Hōta havyam hutabhugiti yam prāha
 śabdaḥ swayambhūḥ
 Satvaṃ viṣṇurjanakat anaya sācha
 padmākṣa Padmā.

Lakshmana listens to hear the *sloka* and gesticulates as follows addressing Rama: 'What do I hear, O lotus-eyed brother, Vishnu controls all activities such as creation, protection, destruction, etc. of everything, causes division of the three worlds—the earth, the celestial world and the nether world. The Lord also keeps all these within his belly and reclines on the giant snake Anantha (Ādisēsha) where He is in *yoga nidra*'. He lies without any movement as though He is stationary. To him vedas are the agents and priests conducting sacrifices, oblations as well as sacrificial fire personified as Vishnu. He enjoys the fruits of the sacrifice in the guise of the various celestials to whom oblations are offered in the sacrificial fire. You are that Vishnu. The Lakshmi who appears on the lotus and so known as Padma is Sita herself, born as the daughter of King Janaka. So you should accept Sita who is free of any suspicion regarding her character and conduct as she

is absolutely flawless, unblemished. Is it not so, I hear?"

Again drumming goes on, stops, and the following *sloka* is heard from the *nepathyam* in Veladhūli: "Madāmbhasā viyati Mahendra dantinaḥ Kalankayaḥ himaruci karnacamaram Nabhonadi nalinaparaga dhūsaraḥ samiraṇo ranarujamadhunoṭhu tē". Lakshmana listens and then gesticulates addressing Rama: "Oh lotus-eyed brother, please see the wind is darkening the snow-white ears of Iravatha, the white elephant of Indra, by splashing the *madaphala* of the animal over its ears. The wind itself is turned into slightly yellowish-white by the contact of the pollen dust of the lotus flowers in the celestial river. This wind relieves all their sorrow experienced as a result of the battle you fought. Do I hear so?"

After signalling to stop the drumming Sri Rama recites "Āsruta pūrvōyam grāma rāgā" and gesticulates: "This *grama raga*, the variety of music known as *gandharva grama* now heard was not heard so far in this world, because it is sung only in the celestial world'. And Rama repeats the words after signalling drumming to stop. Again he continues: "Lakṣmaṇa paśya paśya, prabhānulepād apūrve iva dyāvā pṛthivyāu; paśya. (In Danam) Śroni meroriva setu saita velavanom kalpa vamopamānam Sainyam kapīnām Kamaka prabhanam Amridita prayam abhudianim." Rama gesticulates: "Lakshmana, look; the brilliance we see now spreads everywhere. Consequently the earth and the sky seem entirely changed. The mountains here appear exactly similar to the peaks of Mahameru, fully golden. Again the trees on the seacoast appear as if they are the celestial trees (*Kalpavriksha*) and the forest seems similar to the celestial garden Nandanodyanam and as bright as gold. Moreover all the monkeys in our army who are golden in colour by nature appear more charmingly gold-bright." Signals to stop drumming and hears from *nepathyam*: "Nāradoham āgacchāmi Deva sasanena". Both Rama and Lakshmana gesticulate: "Do we hear Narada declaring his arrival And that too as ordered by the celestials".

They await the arrival of Narada eagerly expressing humility and terminate the performance.

VII

ASCHARYACHUDAMANI: BHARATAVAKYAM

The enacting of Bharatavakyaṃ in Kūṭiyāṭṭam is full of rituals and includes several details from the drama to be produced stylistically on the stage. As a rule it is customary to enact Bharatavakyaṃ in a drama of seven acts at the end of staging all acts in all details observing all ritualistic performances, which may take several days. At the end of the seventh act Bharatavakyaṃ has to be staged on an auspicious day in the earlier hours of the forenoon before the actor takes his lunch.

The Procedure

Sri Rama enters and performs the usual rituals in front of the drum, turns around in the stylized way and carefully looks at the spectators. He pays obeisance to them with the

stylized *Kamalaparivartanam*. He acts as if he sees Narada in the sky, telling him that the sage follows the celestials to heaven. He gesticulates: 'What do I hear? Narada is telling me "O Sri Rama, I am going to heaven in the company of the celestials". Is it so?' Then he signals the drumming to stop and recites in Srikanti: "Siddhārthōham kimatah param icchāmi, tathāpyētāvadastu" and gesticulates: 'With your blessings, and by accomplishing the killing of Ravana I could recover Sita and accept her as the personification of chastity. So I am completely satisfied about the achievements. Moreover, your presence is capable of enabling one to obtain all benefits of the pursushārthas, namely Dharma, Artha, Kama and Moksha, and these too are achieved with your blessings. As a result of the Darshan (Vision) of the Devas (the celestials) who too enabled me to become victorious in all my attempts, there is nothing more I should desire for'. He signals to stop drumming and recites the words uttered earlier. He gestures: "Narada is going". Then he enacts getting into the chariot along with all the others present there and moves as if travelling in the chariot in a stylized manner. Then he turns round and, in the posture of the actor, takes his seat.

He recites all the conversation and *slokas* in the seventh act of the drama proper, beginning with "Vayasya Vibhīshana" (after enacting the entire Samkshepam—substance—of Ramayana up to the killing of Ravana) and shows appropriate gestures along with the recitation, posing himself as the different characters in the appropriate *sthai* and adopting their stylized movements and manners. At the end, when the entire plot of the play is enacted, he poses himself as the actor, turns round and gesticulates 'thus'.

He signals to stop the drumming and says: "Tathāpyētāvadastu". In continuation he gesticulates: 'By witnessing the staging of this Nataka you have derived pleasure. Consequently we have enjoyed satisfaction over the success of the performance and we thankfully accept your reaction. Still, let this request too materialize so that we may enjoy the outcome'. He signals to stop the drumming and the words uttered earlier are repeated once again. Then he recites the *sloka*:

mantraih avarjyāmanam haviramarapatērastu kalyāṇa vṛṣṭyai
dhanvī samkalpajamā sarabhasam apathē sāyākān samhareta,
rājānō rāja dharmapraṇihita manasō maulibhāram vahantām
prajñā yātuprasādam pratidinamavadhūyāntarābaddhamaunam.

He enacts the substance of the *skoka* through gesticulation: Then he recites the *sloka* in the prose order in pieces such as "Mantraih āvarjyamānam havir amarapateḥ kalyāṇa vṛṣṭyai astu". He gesticulates: 'Let the oblations, offered in the sacrificial fire by the performer of the sacrifice, uttering appropriate *mantras* or Vedic hymns, change form, as *parjanya* as ordained by Indra results in *kalyāṇa vṛṣṭi*, i.e., may the required quantity of rainfall according to needs and as desired for by all creatures'.

He then signals to stop the drumming and recites: "Dhanvī samkalpajamā apathē sāyākān sarabhasam samhareta" and gesticulates the meaning: 'The archer, Kamadeva, may be prevented from sending arrows at men to influence them to desire union with women other than their wedded wives and at women to influence them to desire union

with men other than their wedded husbands'. And then he signals the drumming to stop and recites: "Rājānō rājadharmam praṇihita manāśo maulibhāram vahantām" and gesticulates: Let Rajas do their duty of ruling the kingdoms in order to enable the subjects to enjoy their life fully to their entire satisfaction". He signals the drumming to stop and recites: "Prajñā antah ābaddha māunam avadhūya pratidinam prasādam yātu" and gesticulates: 'The intellectual powers of all people may become self-reliant, self-supporting, remain alive and avoid getting inactive under the influence of sleep or indifference and become fully involved in activities for the welfare of all creatures by emulating Sri Rama. Due to ignorance let not people show attachment to their physical welfare and ephemeral pleasures. Let them realize the spirituality and reality of the cosmic soul. May they identify themselves with the cosmic soul!' He signals drumming to stop and recites the latter half of the *sloka*.

The drumming continues after the recital of Tamil (that is, recitation by the Nambiar of the contents of the *sloka* in the local spoken language in vogue in the old days). The actor removes the headgear, sprinkles water on his face, sitting on the floor of the stage signifying Avabhṛta snānam, the ceremonial bath at the end of the visual sacrifice. He gets up, turns round in the stylized *kaliyam* manner, collects some of the wicks from the three sets of wicks burning in the oil lamp, representing the three fires in the sacrifice, namely Gārhapatyagni, Dakshiniāgni and Āhavanīyāgni, and extinguishes it. The last action signifies offering the *yagna sala*, sacrificial building, to the God of fire as the final oblation.

The actor prostrates before the spectators finally, paying obeisance. The spectators accept the honour and bless him by clapping hands.

(The performance of Bharatavakyam is very rare these days. Perhaps it has not been done during this century. It was performed recently at Margi, Trivandrum, at the end of the complete staging of *Ascharyachudamani* [all the Seven Acts].)